



STATE OF VERMONT
Department of Education
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Commissioner Cate Proposes Education Governance Reform Model

MONTPELIER – Vermont Education Commissioner Richard Cate today presented a white paper, *The Governance of Education in Vermont – 1777-2006*, to the State Board of Education at its monthly meeting. The paper, meant to stimulate a year-long discussion, outlines a plan for changing the governance model of the education system in Vermont.

“This report is not only timely, but it raises all the right issues,” said State Board Chair Tom James.

The Board expressed general support for the proposal, and plans to hold further discussions at its June retreat. The State Board and the Commissioner noted the importance of working together with the Vermont School Boards Association, the Legislative Council on Education Governance and the Vermont Educational Leadership Collaborative, as well as other stakeholders. With the Board’s support, Commissioner Cate will now begin the process of discussions across the state.

The proposed governance model addresses several concerns about education in Vermont, including the cost and quality of education, stagnant student enrollment and a short supply of school leader candidates.

“Much has changed in recent years and I am convinced, based on what I have heard from Vermonters, that this is an appropriate time to have this discussion,” explains Cate. “I am proposing that we have a conversation, not that we move forward now with a formal proposal. I do not presume to suggest that the model presented here is a solution to all of the challenges that confront us, but it is intended to stimulate conversation.”

The model outlines the following fundamental changes to Vermont’s education governance structure:

- Reduce the number of school districts in Vermont from 284 to 63.
- Draw the new school district boundaries to align with the existing supervisory union and school district boundaries.
- Whatever funding formula is in place at the time would apply to the new school districts.
- School boards would consist of one member elected from each municipality within the new school district boundaries with weighted voting to address the one-person one-vote legal requirement.
- The school board of each district would appoint a superintendent.
- The superintendent, with the consent of the school board, would appoint the principals of the schools and the other administrators in the district.

- No proposal for changes to the teacher hiring process are included in the proposal.
- Improve the existing statutory language regarding the creation of unified union districts.
- Allow students and parents to choose which Vermont public school the students will attend, subject to capacity.
- Eliminate provisions in the aid formula related to per-student costs.

“Through reaching a better understanding about cost, we can also increase the quality of education because of the additional flexibility that comes from the kinds of districts this model suggests,” continued James.

The complete document is available on the Department of Education Web site, www.education.vermont.gov, under “What’s New?”